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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SOFIA 000703

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ENRG](#) [ECON](#) [BU](#)  
SUBJECT: DAS QUANRUD'S DECEMBER 11 VISIT TO SOFIA

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Susan Sutton for reasons 1.4 (b) and(d)  
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11. (C) SUMMARY: In December 11 meetings with DAS Quanrud, Bulgarian Defense Minister Mladenov described his plans for new deployments to Afghanistan and asked for U.S. support to establish a NATO training hub, possibly for OMLTs, at our joint military facilities in Bulgaria. Noting Bulgaria's tight budgets, he urged the U.S. and NATO to find ways to partner wealthy countries that were unwilling to fight with poorer allies that had political will but fewer resources. Both Mladenov and Deputy Foreign Minister Lyutskanov emphasized the importance of close coordination on Afghanistan, Iran, Russia and the Western Balkans and offered Bulgarian assistance wherever it is needed. DPM and MoI Tsvetanov noted the progress his government has made in fighting corruption, including dozens of indictments against current and former public officials and reform of the Ministry of the Interior and the National Security Agency. He emphasized the importance he places on U.S. political support and close law enforcement cooperation, including exchange programs and technical assistance. Lyutskanov and the Deputy Minister of Economy and Energy stressed the pressure Bulgaria was under to continue participation in Russian-dominated energy projects. END SUMMARY.

Afghanistan  
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12. (C) DEFMIN Mladenov said Bulgaria welcomed President Obama's Afghanistan speech and said three areas were particularly important going forward: protecting the Afghan civilian population, greater engagement at the regional level, and a strengthened civilian development and reconstruction effort. Like others in the alliance, Bulgaria worries that Karzai will not act responsibly, particularly in his handling of the regional governments. Mladenov also suggested that NATO discuss which scenarios for Taliban reconciliation would be acceptable. Both Mladenov and DFM Lyutskanov agreed on the importance of steady public outreach and said NATO should step up its public diplomacy efforts, including programs to send journalists to Afghanistan and Brussels.

13. (C) Noting that Bulgarian forces do not operate under any national caveats, Mladenov said Bulgaria would increase its 470-person contingent in Afghanistan and eventually consolidate it in the Kandahar area. Details will hopefully be complete by January, but he'd like to send an additional 20 soldiers in January and another 70 to 80 later in 2010. He noted that Bulgaria is also prepared to send a second Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) whenever an appropriate Afghan National Army partner unit is identified. In addition, Bulgaria has the personnel and equipment necessary to deploy a Role Two Military Medical facility, but it does not have sufficient funds for transport and sustainment in the field. Mladenov said he wrote to the U.S.

Defense Department to see if it is possible to embed this medical facility into a U.S. contingent.

14. (C) Mladenov said Bulgaria wants to play a positive role in Afghanistan beyond military assistance. On December 10, Bulgaria announced it would contribute five police trainers to the EU police mission in Afghanistan. Once the NATO Training Mission -- Afghanistan (NTM-A) is fully operational, he said Bulgaria would participate in this as well. Bulgaria also plans to invite Afghan military personnel to participate in Bulgarian military education and training programs.

15. (C) Addressing the broader picture of NATO force generation for Afghanistan, Mladenov suggested that the Alliance find better ways to match up wealthy countries that are unwilling to fight with poorer countries with greater political will but fewer resources. He said a UK/French initiative to refurbish helicopters provided some precedent for this and urged the allies to find other creative approaches. He said Bulgaria has spoken with other allies and some, like the UK, were very supportive.

#### Using U.S.-Bulgaria Bases to Support Afghanistan

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16. (C) The Defense Minister acknowledged the bruising budget battles currently waging inside the Bulgarian government and said that money would continue to be the biggest obstacle to additional deployments. Nevertheless, he said he would work to find other, creative ways to contribute to the fight. He said the joint military facilities in Bulgaria were a underutilized resource, and he hopes they

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could become a hub for NATO training, perhaps for OMLTs. He has discussed this idea with U/SD Flournoy and with SACEUR and said both responded positively. He hoped that DAS Quanrud would also raise this issue in Washington to help gain traction.

#### Establishing a Regular Security Dialogue

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17. (C) Mladenov said the U.S.-Bulgaria security relationship could be made stronger through more regular consultations at a more senior level. Complex issues such as expanding the use of our joint facilities, joint deployments in Afghanistan, acquisition of U.S. aircraft, and missile defense cooperation could be analyzed and decided more efficiently with an annual meeting. He requested DAS Quanrud explore with OSD such consultations.

Iran

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18. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Lyutskanov noted Bulgaria supported the last round of sanctions against Iran, and would continue to continue to support a hard line. He wondered whether the U.S. and Europe should more openly and vigorously support the opposition in Iran, though he acknowledged that the appearance of outside support could hurt the opposition and leave us open to accusations of meddling.

Russia

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19. (C) Lyutskanov described the Bulgarian attitude to Russia as a "love-hate" relationship. In his view, Russia is operating under a great deal of fear, as its internal situation is highly unstable. Russian leaders, he commented, still feel they must posture as if they were "Peter the Great or Stalin," and have made mistakes in Eastern Europe by being too forceful in dealing with their former satellites. He agreed that more confidence building measures are needed and argued that despite "irresponsible policies" by Moscow, a soft, measured approach will accomplish more than a hard

line. He said it is important to get the NATO-Russia dialogue back on track and added that a new NATO-China dialogue would be valuable as well.

¶10. (C) Mladenov emphasized that Europe should reject any Russian security proposal that would lessen the role of NATO, EU, OSCE or CFE structures. He noted, however, that from a Russian perspective, the allies' annual expenditure of money, time and resources on NATO Reaction Force rotations must seem provocative when the alliance claims that Afghanistan is NATO's main threat and not Russia.

#### The Balkans

¶11. (C) Lyutskanov said it was important for Europe and America to continue to engage the Western Balkan countries. He shared our disappointment over Bosnia's inability to make the political progress necessary to qualify for MAP, but noted that Bulgaria still supports eventual EU and NATO membership for all of the Western Balkans. On a positive note, he emphasized that the decision to allow visa-free travel to the EU for the countries of former Yugoslavia was a positive development as it gave these countries a window into Europe and offered them an attractive alternative to isolation and "refighting old wars". If the U.S. has specific ideas for how Bulgaria could further assist the integration of the Western Balkans, he said his Ministry would be happy to help.

#### Visa Waiver Program

¶12. (C) Lyutskanov stressed the importance of the visa waiver program to Bulgaria. As a strategic partner who cooperates with the United States in all areas of foreign policy and defense, it is painful for Bulgarians to remain outside the VWP.

#### Rule of law

¶13. (C) DPM and MoI Tsvetanov stressed the progress his ministry has made in the fight against organized crime (OC) and corruption and the importance of close cooperation with the United States. He noted that GERB's goal was the establishment of an interagency approach to fighting

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organized crime and corruption and was working closely with the State Security Agency, the Minister of Justice and the Prosecutor General to accomplish this. Since taking power in July, the new government has achieved success in pursuing high-level corruption cases and passing needed reforms. When asked about "next steps," he said that reform of the criminal code and criminal procedure code was a top priority as well as formation of specialized court panels to hear OC/corruption cases. He acknowledged that broader judicial reform was also necessary, but said his preference was to allow the judiciary to work this problem internally in order to avoid the appearance of interfering with the independence of the judicial branch. He noted the high impact of U.S. law enforcement assistance and said that nearly all of his regional police chiefs had received U.S. training. U.S. equipment and resources are also of great assistance in Bulgaria's efforts to fight highly sophisticated organized crime groups. He suggested that U.S.-based training for a top cadre of Bulgaria's best judges could be highly beneficial.

¶14. (C) In a meeting with representatives of leading Bulgarian NGOs, rule of law experts agreed that the new GERB government has the political will to fight corruption, though some worry that incompetence, apathy and corruption throughout the staffs of the ministries would make reform difficult despite the best intentions of a few at the top.

But all agreed that the government was off to a good start and deserved support. Representatives of UNODC and the EC emphasized that the international community would like to see more successful prosecutions in organized crime and corruption cases.

¶15. (C) All agreed that reform of the criminal code and the criminal procedure code is sorely needed, and that corruption among prosecutors and judges remains one of the most serious challenges facing Bulgaria. There was no consensus, however, on the best way forward. Some felt that constitutional amendments were necessary to fundamentally reshape the judiciary system (such as reform of the Supreme judicial Council or moving the Prosecutorial service into the government), while others focused on ways to hold the judiciary accountable for its actions.

#### Energy

¶16. (C) Lyutskanov noted the intense Russian pressure Bulgaria is under to conclude energy deals. He agreed that Bulgarian bargaining power will increase over time, but given Russia's pressure, he said "it is hard for us to wait." He agreed that transparency should be Bulgaria's guiding principle in all its negotiations and over time, he believes Russia will accept that it is dependent on Bulgaria as a market and will alter its approach. Deputy Minister of Economy, Energy and Tourism Ivo Marinov, who had just returned from talks with the Russians, said there would be no great breakthroughs or surprises emerging from Bulgarian-Russian economic talks held in Sofia December 10-11. Negotiations on South Stream, the Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipeline and the Belene nuclear power plant would all continue. At the same time, Bulgaria would continue to support Nabucco and seek additional diversification through interconnector projects, LNG and CNG, and nuclear fuel alternatives.

#### GUANTANAMO

¶17. (C) In a dinner with DAS Quanrud, Parliamentarians focused on whether Bulgaria should accept a Guantanamo detainee. They noted that an internal memo from the Prime Minister and a letter from SPE Fried had been leaked and circulated within Parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee earlier in the day. Those present supported taking a detainee, and agreed that humanitarian and EU-solidarity arguments would best persuade the Bulgarian public to support such a decision. They noted that the Foreign Affairs Committee would discuss the issue with DPM Tsvetanov December

¶15.

DAS Quanrud has reviewed this message.

SUTTON